

WISHA Interim Operations Memorandum
Washington Department of Labor and Industries
#99-1-E
SCAFFOLDS AND THE FALL PROTECTION WORK PLAN

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Background

New requirements governing the use of scaffolds in construction took effect April 15, 1998. These requirements are found in Part J-1 of Chapter 296-155 WAC, the Construction standard.

In contrast with previous scaffold requirements, which did not specifically address all aspects of required fall protection, the new Part J-1 requires that "each employee on a scaffold more than 10 feet (3.1m) above a lower level shall be protected from falling to that lower level" and provides additional specific guidance regarding appropriate fall protection (WAC 296-155-483(7)(a)). The standard also requires "maximum feasible fall protection" to be used during scaffold erection and dismantling.

With the exception of references regarding appropriate fall protection components and a note regarding the installation of suspension scaffolding, the new Part J-1 does not rely upon the more general fall protection requirements of Parts C-1 and K of Chapter 296-155 WAC. Because Part C-1 requires a written, site-specific fall protection work plan, questions have been raised about applying this requirement to the erection, use, and dismantling of scaffolds.

This interim memorandum provides guidance to WISHA consultation and enforcement staff regarding the appropriate application of the fall protection work plan requirements in relation to scaffolds. It will remain in effect until a more formal directive can be finalized.

Policy

1. WISHA enforcement and consultation staff must cite violations of the fall protection work plan requirements for fall exposure only when the underlying fall protection requirement is appropriately found in Part C-1 of Chapter 296-155 WAC (where the fall protection work plan requirement itself is found).

For this reason, WISHA staff must not cite violations resulting from the erection, use and/or dismantling of scaffolds subject to the requirements of Part J-1 of Chapter 296-155 WAC. Fall protection violations in such circumstances must be restricted to those found in or specifically referenced by Part J-1.

2. WISHA enforcement and consultation staff must appropriately apply the requirements of Part C-1 and Part K of Chapter 296-155 WAC, including the fall protection work plan requirements found in Part C-1, when employees are installing suspension scaffold support systems on floors, roofs, and other elevated surfaces.

The requirements of Parts C-1, K, and any other applicable sections of Chapter 296-155 WAC apply whenever employees associated with the scaffold are working anywhere else, such as when accessing the scaffold through the building or installing fall protection anchors or scaffold ties while standing on the structure.